camels to draw up the water, but the southern Bedu always lift it by hand. They fasten a leather bucket, holding about four gallons, to either end of the rope which runs over the pulley, so that as one bucket is drawn up full the other descends empty. Men and women draw together on the well-ropes, four or five to each rope, singing in chorus as they work.
233 We had not been here long before the camel herds arrived and the serious work of watering began. Great leather troughs supported on crossed wooden hoops were set up by each family around the well. Soon there was no room for more watering parties, and late-comers had to wait their turn. The buckets rose and fell and were tipped into the troughs above which the thirsty camels pushed and thrust while their calves frolicked around. Shouting herdsmen, stripped to the waist, ran in and out among them, driving away camels which did not belong to them, and restraining the more impatient of their own. Others scratched the hind-quarters of their favourite beasts, while they sang them their watering songs to induce them to drink deep. When they had drunk they were couched nearby, to be watered again later in the day, before being driven back to pasturage. Round the well-mouth women filled their water-skins, which then lay swollen and quivering upon the ground, guarded from the trampling feet of the camels by shrill-voiced little girls, clad only in a leather fringe around their waists. Few of the women were veiled and all joined freely in the constant jests and laughter. Among them was a tall girl of startling beauty. She had come down to the well early in the day, carrying a water-skin and accompanied by her young sister. The centre of a happy laughing group of lads, she dallied here till the evening.

A family of Se'ar from off the mountains were camped under an overhanging cliff nearby, and they bade us join them and drink coffee. Kinsmen of the Bin Ma'arid, they yet differed from them in their dress and way of life. They wore indigo-dyed loincloths and wraps around their shoulders, as is the fashion among the Southern Bedu, whereas the Bin Ma'arid were clad like the Northern Arabs in long white shirts whose pointed sleeves fell nearly to the ground. They were returning to their homes in Raidat al Se'ar, a two days' journey to the south. Plantations of sorghum and beans are grown there in a shallow valley, guarded by numerous stone-built forts and watch-towers, which look out across the desolate stony plateau. Raidat is seldom visited by other Arabs, for it is the very stronghold of the Se'ar, who have an evil reputation for treachery.